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EDITORIAL NOTES

GEORGE HERBERT LOCKE

It is with great pleasure that we welcome still another of the admirable reports of that indefatigable and ever-interesting investigator Mr. M. E. Sadler. This time his concern is with the opportunities for secondary education in Hampshire, and we are reproducing his comments upon the function of secondary education in general that our readers may get his point of view. It is this feature of enunciating principles that makes his reports literature instead of mere compilations of facts and analyses of local situations.

*SUGGESTIONS IN
REGARD TO
SECONDARY
EDUCATION FROM
MR. SADLER'S
LATEST REPORT*

"It will be agreed that the most valuable results of secondary education do not consist in masses of book learning, or in the possession of certificates (it being only too easy to give people more knowledge than they can digest, as well as the wrong kind of knowledge for their needs), but in alertness and openness of mind, in clearness of thought, in the power of getting to the bottom of things, of drawing right conclusions from facts, and of grappling with difficulties in a practical and persevering way; in ability to work with other people; in firmness of moral principle; in courage, reverence, and self-control. The merits of a school, therefore, should be measured, not merely by the success of its pupils in examinations, but by their general intelligence, by their bearing, by their sense of duty, by their conduct when school days are over, by their public spirit, and by their habit of steady and thorough work. To secure these benefits the essential thing to provide is a staff of teachers of high personal character and of cultivated mind. So far as the course of studies is concerned, it should not be prematurely specialized. A general training on liberal lines is the best preparation for technical education, and most likely to give the necessary power of self-adaptation to new and unforeseen conditions in the practical duties of adult life. But the spirit of the education matters more than its form, and the attitude of mind which it produces is more important than the amount of actual knowledge which it provides. In point of curriculum, secondary education should not be all of one type. Different temperaments and different types of mind have a natural affinity for different courses of study. On the intellectual side, the chief business of a secondary school is to secure a wide and discriminating outlook, to make the learner quick to see the bearing of one thing on another, and to train in him the power of concentrating his thoughts upon the work in hand.

"The tone and tradition of the school, the personal example and the influence of its teachers and the corporate life of the scholars, are of no less importance

than the actual course of its studies. But through the medium of a course of studies a school has necessarily to do the greater part of its intellectual and character-forming work. Therefore the right choice of a course of studies is a matter of great moment in educational policy. But it is also, owing to the vast range and variety of knowledge now available for the purpose, a matter of extreme difficulty, upon which there is at present great conflict of opinion among those best qualified to judge. We are compelled to regard the whole question as being, through the operation of intellectual and social forces which lie beyond individual control, to some extent once more in an experimental stage. Nevertheless, in spite of our uncertainty on many points touching the curriculum of schools, the forces of the time make it necessary to act. In this and in other countries there is an unmistakable demand for new educational opportunities. This demand springs from many causes. The rise of a new and highly skilled artisan class has led to a desire for a more advanced kind of education than is at present usually given in the public elementary schools. This is probably the most significant feature in the new educational situation with which we have to deal. A type of school is needed which will carry forward and supplement the work of the elementary school. This development is often asked for under the name of secondary education. Again, there is a strong feeling that the elementary schools should themselves be improved, the training made more individual, and the classes smaller. This has led to the need of more teachers, and involves better provision being made for their educational and professional training. In the third place, modern business life in nearly all its forms makes greater demands than heretofore on the intellectual powers, and therefore necessitates a better intellectual training in the case of those who are destined for posts of responsibility in industrial and commercial life. Fourthly, the range of professional life has widened. The secondary schools have to consider the needs not only of the older learned professions (including the profession of the teacher), but of a number of other callings, such as accountancy, public administration, and the municipal service, which are now as exacting in their intellectual demands. And, lastly, there is a growing conviction that the civil welfare of the whole community calls for a widening of the intellectual outlook by means of well directed school training.

"The chief difficulty in the way of developing intellectual keenness in our secondary schools lies in the temper of the time. Many of the old aims, which were implicit in educational work, are passing through a phase of readjustment to changed social needs. Secondary education is especially sensitive to psychological conditions, and feels the influence of the uncertainties which arise in a period of rapid intellectual and social transition. The new learning of our time has not yet found its fit form as an instrument of instruction for the generality of pupils in the secondary schools. Patience is needed, and the securing of men who will devote great intellectual power, with strong moral purpose, to the problem of what to teach in our English secondary schools, and how best to teach it.

"A good deal of the actual instruction, as distinct from the corporate training, given in many of our English secondary schools at the present time, is of much

less value than it might be to many of those who receive it. There are indeed many honorable, and some brilliant, exceptions to this, and there is no reason whatever to feel disheartened for the future. Everywhere there are signs of a new spirit in English secondary education. Moreover, in their hold upon character, and in their regard for the personal welfare of their pupils, our good English secondary schools are unrivaled in the world. But much of what is actually taught in the way of lessons has often too little relation to the real needs of life. There is apt to be too much working up for examinations, and too much of the certificate-winning kind of training. There is often too much reliance upon text books; too close a following of the beaten and dusty way. Too often the lessons are in no real sense the outcome of the teacher's own intellectual life, and consequently they fail to arouse any intellectual interests, or to engender a belief in the power of knowledge among those to whom they are given. But it must never be forgotten under what disheartening difficulties great numbers of the teachers have to carry on their work. Their intellectual life is often choked by poverty, stunted by lack of opportunity of travel or further study, deadened sometimes by years of drudgery prolonged into disappointed middle age. And teachers can do but little unless their work is carried forward by some great intellectual or national movement of which it is the expression, and from which it derives its power of appeal and its spiritual force. . . .

"It is just that in the reorganization which is now going forward in English secondary and higher education (a movement which has had no real counterpart in our national history) care should be taken to secure for country-bred children access to those opportunities for advanced education which are afforded by efficient secondary schools. The possession of a good education counts for more and more in the organization of modern life. It is highly undesirable therefore, that intelligent parents should feel that by living in the country they are endangering the intellectual welfare of their children. Hence in the foregoing chapters of this report the needs of country children have been carefully kept in mind, and suggestions have been made for meeting them by the provision (1) of efficient secondary or higher elementary schools at convenient centers throughout the country; (2) of allowances to cover the cost of railway fares in the case of Junior County Scholars who, though at some distance from a secondary school, live within daily reach of one; and (3) of a number of boarding scholarships for children of special promise who live too far away from a secondary school to pass to and from their homes every day. In view of the number of useful careers now open to women, it is proposed that these facilities should be placed within the reach of girls as well as boys.

"Modern business of all kinds, whether it be carried on in town or country, causes an ever-increasing demand for the power of organization. The power of organization, if it is to be effectively used under modern conditions, requires not only persistent application and accuracy in details, but a wide range of knowledge and the trained use of the imagination. It also involves the habit of applying knowledge to practical ends, of bringing together different portions of knowledge

into new combinations, and of quickly realizing the bearing of new developments of knowledge upon customary ways of doing things and upon the probable demand for new kinds of skilled service. These qualities are capable of culture by means of appropriate school training. It is part of the business of a good school, and especially of a secondary school, to cultivate them. And thus an efficient system of secondary and higher education can supply the very kind of power which modern business relationships require. Schools cannot actually create the power, but they can develop or cultivate it, and greatly increase its value. The power is needed in the country as well as in the towns, and in some respects the need for it in the country is the more pressing. It is to the interest of the whole nation that this power, wherever it is found should be developed to the utmost. Secondary and higher education must therefore be looked upon as a matter of public concern, and not as a luxury which can be left to take its chance without public help or supervision."